Campus feedback on Core workgroup proposals

The following 15 comments were submitted by faculty and staff via email regarding the 15 Core workgroup proposals presented on the Core revision process website: http://www.marquette.edu/common-studies-revision/community-proposals.php

This feedback is separate from the formal input provided by the Core Curriculum Review Committee and the University Board of Undergraduate Studies. For faculty contributions, date of submission and college are identified; for staff contributions, date of submission and unit are identified.

3/14 faculty: arts and sciences

I read the proposals with great interest and was impressed with the dedication, creativity, and imagination that went into their creation. There is a lot to be said for them. However, I find myself ultimately drawn to the recognition in Proposal Five that:

"First, we think that Constraints (1) and (2) make anything except a Distributional Core unrealistic. The overarching structure we currently have, in other words, is unavoidable at MU. This may well be regrettable, but it is a fact we have to live with."

It seems to me that a great many of these proposals suffer from ambitions that are likely to be simply unimplementable, either because they rely on experience models that are not scalable to 8000+ undergrads (specialized or service learning, TedX seminars, etc) or because they require complicated and very specific sequencing that students are highly likely to deviate from in practice. I would strongly be in favor of a simple, flexible, and easy-to-follow core with clear distribution requirements that is frankly not that different from what we already have.

In particular, it seems to me that most of the more ambitious, thematically organized Core proposals under discussion would not be able to be mapped onto AP, IB, and transfer credit schemas at all, which would potentially backfire by strongly disincentivizing students from applying, accepting admission, or transferring to Marquette.

A few other observations:

* The various ideas about a core that uses anything like a "deep dive" model devoted to a specific also seem frankly antithetical to the idea of a core predicated on a wide range of learning experiences; I would not want to eliminate the current model of the core in favor of a model where students take a three- or four-course sequence on a limited topic.

* I am attracted to the tiered "agents of change" redesign in Proposal Four but would suggest that the frames would have to be very flexible indeed to work on a campus with stakeholders who have very different ideas about the meaning of social justice (to say the least). I think the framework they provide would be feasible, however.

* I like the idea of a Core, First-Year-Experience, or Marquette Seminar course, if sufficiently flexible and interesting to students. If the size of the core cannot be increased, however, it's not obvious to me which of the existing categories should be shrunk or eliminated.
* A capstone experience seems better facilitated by individual majors than any attempt to bring seniors together in their final semesters, but perhaps the Core could be used to mandate something along the lines of the capstone experience English has recently added to its major.

Thanks to all for the hard work on this.
"I participated in generating one of the proposals (12), which was based in part on an earlier and more detailed draft which I wrote. The final document, however, is a composite which reflects various and sometimes conflicting visions. Here, I'll try to summarize my thoughts on the process:

I prefer a conservative approach to reforming the core (proposals 12 and 13). Trained in Harvard's distributional core, and noting that Notre Dame's core revision has essentially adopted a distributional model, I continue to see the merits of this system (even if the language of "distributional" is abandoned). Given the timeframe of this process, don't see where the resources for the development of a radical new core can come from. Integrations best happen, at this early stage, by incentivizing departments (and individual professors) to draw on their own abilities and friendships to integrate disciplines (e.g. Theology and English Literature; Philosophy and SoJo). This is already happening in many places. I think we would be prudent to give departments autonomy to find routes of integration that best fit their knowledge and gifts. In addition to (1) individual professors developing syllabi which model integrations, integrations might happen through (2) course pairing and (3) team-taught, interdisciplinary courses; it may finally happen through (4) an initial common experience and (5) capstone course, although 4 and 5 may be difficult to staff. Focusing on incentives, and creating a friendly competition among faculty to get creative about integration courses (without mandating this through a radically restructured core) seems to me most prudent and feasible at this time.

Finally, with […], I agree that it is very difficult to assess these proposals due to their lack of distributional specification. I understand that this was an intentional part of the process, but it makes evaluation difficult. I believe in the unique contributions of the sciences, humanities, rhetoric/performance, and philosophy and theology (the latter two being "architectonic disciplines in Jesuit pedagogy"), which are each non-reducible in terms of their "wisdoms" or "ways of knowing." In an earlier proposal, which never made it off the drafting floor, I suggested a "biological" model: thinking of Humanities, Sciences, Rhetoric/Com, and Theology/Philosophy as four "systems" in a traditional Jesuit education. While I would avoid too much sequencing, the two philosophy and theology requirements might reasonably be divided between first and third years, in partial keeping with Phil's sense that they should be postponed. The fact is that we (theology) need majors, and if we don't get students in one class early, we are doing ourselves a disservice."

Thank you for your hard work in organizing this and helping us make this long-needed update.
4/1 faculty: arts and sciences
The time frame for remarking on the proposals is looming. While I have read all of the 15 proposals (and their variations). All the proposals have interesting aspects and represent a significant time commitment by numerous individuals. I don’t feel my comments will do justice to all the proposals – there are too many proposals to address with the care that a university’s core should demand.

The early Jesuits took into account their perception of, and experience in, student development when setting up the up a standard for the global structure for their schools’ curriculum. In reading all proposals, there were times I felt that proposals did not always take into account the “inputs”- that we are dealing with real people, with freshman transition issues, emerging adulthood, cognitive development and changing self-reflection capacity. Some proposals, such as Proposal #1, #4, #11, and #13 are close to the Ratio Studiorum in general structure, although I believe the Ratio Studiorum had an explicit rationale for placing philosophy and theology at the end of the program of study as well as an explicit developmental point-of-view for its tiers of study.

Proposal #2 was intriguing. I finished reading the proposal and returned to it, I realized I wasn’t sure what the structure really was, in particular, what the second-level entailed and whether it truly had an interdisciplinary aspect to the second-level. I was initially thrown off by the model’s name, “Jesuit Charism” because Jesuit charism could be viewed differently than perhaps as employed in the proposal’s text, e.g., http://www.jesuitvocations.org/Assets/Publications/File/WHO-SJ_Charism.pdf Proposal #2 may also be a bit too flexible, perhaps lacking a shared experience and a definite sense of a core?

Proposal #3 is not a core proposal, per se. It is a proposal for a sequence of three one-credit seminars to be added to a core. The three one-credit seminars are to provide a “mechanism for explicitly delivering Mission based content and experiences”. Quick back of the envelop calculations suggest that ~40-55 seminars per semester per level would be required, e.g., incoming class of 2100 divided by 19 students per seminar = ~111 seminars for the first academic year. So, for first year students, we would need around ~55 seminars per semester if we are to balance enrollments across the fall and spring semesters. If the seminars have enrollment greater than 19, we should check whether the additional “larger” seminar courses might negatively impact our US News and World Report ranking. Bottom line: To handle all three levels each semester, human resources would be need to be located to staff 120 - 165 seminars (where the top end number is unlikely). Proposal #6, 7, 8, 13, etc., have similar seminar aspects. There are similar resource matters to examine.

Proposal #4 Tier 2 of its core seems to lack integration.

Proposal #5 main contribution was trying to address a long standing academic advising concern via a “Core Understanding Course”. Other proposals comment on similar necessity, reminding students and faculty that the core should not degenerate into a checklist (as also observed in proposal #9 and 10). Proposal #6 however seems to explicitly suggest “check off” in its addendum for the Junior and Senior years.
Proposal #12 appears to be very general, with many options for possible implementation.

Proposal #13. I believe that the authors comment “circles present a potential sequence and structure” only applies to circles 1 to 3.

Having truly integrated interdisciplinary courses is challenging and requires ongoing commitment. While several proposals include discussion of faculty development and other issues, internal reward structure(s) are also a barrier.

I have read the other proposals but I have run out of time in trying to provide feedback to the committee by the April 1 deadline.
I am immensely grateful to all of the focus groups and their members who gave of their time and energy to construct the fifteen proposals under review. In the process of studying each proposal, I was struck by a two-fold need to be met by the structure of the Core. This two-fold need consists in a simultaneous a) integration of disciplines through a unified set of questions, and b) identification of each discipline's unique approach to these shared questions. Both holistic integration and a preservation of each discipline's particularity are essential for the students' Core experience. Students will then be able to creatively engage each discipline's particular method of inquiry from a set of shared questions that emerge when seeking to understand and appreciate the promise and the challenges of our contemporary world.

Proposal 7 explicitly addresses this two-fold need. It suggests a model that begins with a Marquette Seminar to guide students in the formulation of a set of questions to carry with them throughout their undergraduate careers. They will be able to explore these questions across several unique methods of inquiry (that will be examined within theology, philosophy, literature, history, foreign languages, mathematics, the natural and social sciences, etc.) that they will learn throughout the rest of their Core requirements, culminating in a Senior Seminar that can be offered in their Major. By holding together the two goals of a) integration and b) the preservation of each discipline's unique method of inquiry, the Core will be integrated with the students' Majors. Each method of inquiry they learn in the Core will help students to engage their crucial questions that will shape the way they approach their Majors and their future vocations being nurtured by their respective colleges (Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Business, Communication, Health Sciences, Nursing, Education).
Here are my comments on the proposals for the new core.

Rationale

My main concern is about the place and role of the humanities in the new core. Marquette has already taken many steps toward transforming the university toward a professional and technical school. As a consequence, the weakening of the humanities is well under way. Many of the proposals for the new core would make this a fact.

Although employers and community leaders lament the lack of skills of job applicants beyond their capacity to make technical decision, universities--MU included--continue to downplay the importance of the humanities and of the professors in those disciplines.

If we want to be credible in claiming a Jesuit affiliation and speaking of a Jesuit education, we must keep the humanities as part of the foundation of the education we provide. It would be suicidal for our institution to weaken it or get rid of it, as some proposals do.

In addition, there is the importance of a well-rounded education that allows people to make "judgments." As ample current controversies indicate, people can be good at making technical decisions in solving problems, leaders--and we want our students to become future leaders--are not only puzzle-solvers, but will have to be able to make "judgments," taking into consideration the context of a decision, the possible side-effects, the good of the community. In order to do that, they need to be informed of history, to have read literature (as a "laboratory of moral judgments" [Paul Ricoeur]), to be aware of the intricacies of any problem (as philosophy teaches), to know the background and perspectives (cultural and spiritual) from which a question arises.

In short, a core has to include an exposition to what in fact represents the background, context, and range of perspectives from which problems arise and solutions can be created.

Recommendation

I strongly favor those proposals that recognize the obvious (with regard to education) and the necessary (with regard to MU's future), in particular

1. Proposal 9, which is the most coherent and robust.
2. My second choice is any of Proposals 3, 5, 10, 12, and 13.

Thank you for reading,
4/1 staff: campus ministry

In looking through the recommended core revision plan, I found numbers 3, 12, and 13 communicate most clearly frameworks that could continue the university’s mission of providing a Catholic, Jesuit education. However, these proposals will need to flesh out their vision with particular course selections in order to provide greater clarity as to their potential effectiveness in promoting our mission.

Some thoughts that arose while reviewing all of the plans:

1) Liberal Arts Tradition.

The liberal arts tradition serves as the very foundations of a Catholic, Jesuit education. The disciplines contained within the arts help shape the who that our students will be and become as engineers, business persons, etc. While the movement towards “thematic” areas of study open our curriculum for more intensive exploration in the area of majors, this movement also promotes a more cursory introduction to intellectual disciplines, which risks a loss of breadth and depth of thought. I think of all the incredible questions raised in theology, philosophy, and history studies that require time to get into the depths. Quantity and quality of encounter with disciplines are closely linked. Most persons cannot grow their capacity in a particular discipline without a depth of exposure, which requires time. For those plans selected for further consideration, I would encourage dialogue between them and Adolfo Nicholas’ document, “Depth, Universality and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today.”


While not included in the scope of the core revisions, I would add that it is essential that our liberal arts departments be properly resourced. It is essential that we constantly improve and grow our offices, programs, and departments so that we are offering the most excellent educational experience possible. Structures or policies that will downsize crucial departments in the arts will not enable us to continue to provide an excellent Catholic, Jesuit education.


Numerous plans used buzz words associated with the university’s faith mission without any perceptible coherence or understanding of the tradition behind the words. In addition, many buzz words, while having footing in the Catholic intellectual tradition, may oftentimes be used on our campus in a manner totally opposed to and not in dialogue with Catholic thought. It’s essential that we define clearly what is meant by particular buzz words.

In addition, the discipline of theology is different than the study of religion, which is different than the study of ethics, which is different than social justice, etc., etc., etc. Plans that compress these realities as equals and into the same category devalue the richness and essential distinctiveness of these intellectual systems. These plans lack the capacity for serious engagement with these systems and the Catholic intellectual tradition and should not be considered for our core.

I encourage the revision team to revisit the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities’ self-evaluation instrument, entitled “Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges & Universities.”
This document offers some helpful questions as we shape and include essential disciplines and voices throughout the core. Throughout our entire curriculum, courses are tasked with offering engagement with Catholic intellectual traditions. It is essential that our core curriculum continue to encourage students in building genuine foundations that will help with their ongoing intellectual and spiritual dialogue with these traditions as well as others.

Thank you for your work on this essential part of our university’s process to students, the Church, and the world.
3/31 faculty: arts and sciences
After reading through all of the proposals and thinking about how these proposals could bring positive changes to our university I have the following response.

I find proposals #7 and #9 to be the best proposals for the following reasons.

1. They contain plans to incorporate directed, integrated learning across a spectrum of disciplines.

2. They lay out sequencing of classes such that there can be growth in students learning through the core over time but also have built in flexibility so that students can either double major or fit in all of the classes needed for high credit majors.

3. They cover areas of great importance such as ethics, global awareness, an appreciation of humanities, social and natural sciences, theology and service.

4. They provide for the teaching of not only content areas but skills such as critical thinking, inquiry, written and oral communication, and numerical literacy.

Comments on things that may be missing or should be emphasized as the Core revision goes forward.

1. One thing that I feel was missing in these two proposals but was in others is that part of a first year experience should be a class that at least in part functions to help students transition to college. I feel this is really important as many of our students struggle in their first year, especially first generation students. I feel like this could be incorporated as a part of a shared full 3-4 credit class that all freshman take as in Proposal #7 or as a stand alone 1 credit seminar to be added to a framework like in Proposal #9.

2. As was stressed in these proposals a core that has integrated themes and consistent pedagogical goals is incredibly important. Therefore, there needs to be strong support for faculty and core class development so that the core courses truly create an overarching experience for student learning. If support is not strong for the development of these courses than the outcomes of the courses will not be truly integrated.

3. I like the idea of capstone or senior experiences linked to the core but I feel like these should be integrated into the major. Also we should take advantage of already existing experiences in departments such as capstones, internships, senior projects and research experiences to be modified into the core capstone such that these existing structures can be reflective of the core values but also how the major will go forward out into the world.

Thank you to all who produced these proposals,
3/31 faculty: arts and sciences

The various working groups are to be commended on the thoughtful and thorough proposals. I find that some of the proposals do a much better job than others in addressing the needs of the new core. I focus on two issues: integration, and the role of disciplinarity in the common core.

The charge was to address the structure of the new core; the actual classes that would be required would wait until later. As was to be expected, the two issues were not easy to disentangle, so some of my comments will bear on the second set of issues. In regard to structure, the main challenge was to how to integrate the perspective of various disciplines.

Many proposals suggested having special integrative classes devoted just to this, showing how different disciplines approach the same clusters of problems. Some frontload these classes as special seminars; some have them as capstones. I am opposed to such modes of integration. I have some experience with them, as a former co-director of the Interdisciplinary Minor in Environmental Ethics, and one who taught a capstone. I agree the with view expressed in Proposal #9 that such classes are often superficial. (“It’s week 3 so let’s get a biologist’s point of view.”) A meaningful integrative class would build on the sustained research and scholarship grounded in one or more disciplines, branching out, absorbing the insights of one discipline through the modes of inquiry of others. The best way of allowing for this is to do so within the context of team taught classes, in which both professors are doing all of the readings. In this way the students will be part of a true interdisciplinary dialogue, (of the sort that Marquette is encouraging, in regard to faculty research. This is expensive though, and there have been persistent structural difficulties in scheduling such classes. Another, complementary possibility, is more uniformity in regard to the syllabi of the core classes, and a way of having faculty know what exactly is read and studied in other core classes. If King Lear were read by all students in Freshman year, for example, Philosophy professors could refer to it in their Ethics classes. Likewise, if all first year students read Luther in theology, a history professor can appeal to the same text when discussing the Reformation. Such integration would be more meaningful than the band-aid of a capstone. There will be some resistance to having certain texts mandated for part of the core classes, but the benefits of true interdisciplinary integration would be great. Such an initiative would be something new, a pioneering effort that could well win widespread admiration for Marquette’s core.

A related point concerns the importance of disciplines.

Interdisciplinarity is all well and good, but that does not erase the importance of different disciplinary approaches. Of special importance for a core education are those disciplines grouped together as the humanities. These are not simply a matter of “general education,” to enable students to recognize a quotation from Hamlet. Rather, as the term “humanities” suggest, they are modes of study to make students more human, and more humane. There are varieties of wisdom that go beyond technical skill or analysis of statistical regularities. They allow us to be more thoughtful individuals and better citizens (and may I add that the need for education for citizenship is especially evident during this election cycle.) Humanities have a special role in “finding G-d in all things,” especially those disciplines that aim at a synoptic view, with an eye
to ultimate questions: philosophy and theology, which is why these disciplines have traditionally been central to a Jesuit education.

Some of the proposals marginalize those disciplines that are in the humanities. This would be a grave mistake.

The following remarks concerning the individual proposals.

1 I have reservations concerning the capstone (see above). The proposal eliminates the foundational role of philosophy (and theology) as such. It makes any theological or philosophical reflection at all optional.

I am in principle supportive of the idea of TED-type talks, frontloaded in the core.

There is nothing in the core on citizenship, social justice, or cultural diversity.

2. “By indicating how its curriculum satisfies the UCCS rubric for the area students could receive an exemption from the Core foundational course in that area.” This does not pay sufficient attention to the contributions of the respective disciplines. Journalism ethics, for example, might pass as an ethics requirement, but the student would miss out on distinctively philosophical or theological approaches to ethics. Ethics, or philosophy in general, would be squeezed into single n interdisciplinary foundational course. So too with theology. There is no requirement for the humanities as such.

Again, I have reservations concerning the capstone.

Proposal 3

This idea is very good, and does not involve disruption in what we do well. It does not however address gaps in ability to analyze and express.

Proposal 4

Again, the study of ethics need not have a rigorous philosophical basis. Environmental ethics, as important as it is, should not be so highlighted in the core. You can’t do a class in environmental ethics without first doing a philosophical class in ethics. The humanities are marginalized into one “arts” class.

Proposal 5

Again, I have reservations concerning the capstone. That, and the core understanding seminar, are the only substantive changes.

Proposal 6
Reducing the philosophy requirement to one class would be a big mistake. Again, I have reservations concerning the capstone. The team-taught classes come too early, prior to mastering the appropriate disciplinary approaches. There is no humanities requirement as such.

Proposal 7/8

Senior Seminar has the flaws of proposals for a capstone. This one preserves the two current phil and theo requirements, which is good. On the other hand, I read: “The breadth and impact of the rhetoric component of the current core (ENGL 1001, ENGL 1002, COMM 1100) suggest that these courses might serve well as interdisciplinary seminars to engage students in philosophy, ethics, and critical self-reflection” So it is not clear exactly what is going on, in regard to the distinction between “expressive inquiry” and “reflective inquiry.” The substance of the proposal here is not clear.

Proposal 9.

This is the best proposal. It addresses the challenge of integration in a meaningful way. The class focusing on argumentation and communication is much needed, and is missing from other proposals.

Proposal 10.

The distributional requirements retained, which is a good thing. The first year seminar proposal is good, well thought out – it has substance! I also like the The “Leading in Work and Life” course it promises more than a capstone, there is a real writing project at the end, students get to give each other real feedback.

Proposal 11

The first year seminars will have all of the problems of capstones, but even more so, as at that point the students will be in the dark concerning the very basics of the disciplines. Fundamentals seminars, again would lack any disciplinary dimension. The proposal involves an erasure of the importance of the humanities, and, more specifically, philosophy and theology as approaches distinctive to Jesuit learning. Not clear how justice and diversity issues are directly addressed. There is a capstone, too, reservations concerning which I have already shared.

Proposal 12

The proposal is sensitive to the importance of the various disciplines as such. I agree in principle with the proposal but it is very short on specifics.

Proposal 13.

This also has the merit of retaining the fundamentals of the aspects of the current core that are successful. Its major feature is expansion of Introduction to Inquiry. As a former teacher of Introduction to Inquiry, I am of mixed mind. I support the Shared Inquiry model of learning, but
the assigned readings were often light on substance. I know that there has been some
disagreement on how important that is; it is my view that students learn more with deeper, more
substantive content. I am undecided about the worth of the other aspect of Introduction to
Inquiry – helping the students navigate the general transition to college life. Has there been a
study as to how effective intro to inquiry has been in meeting its stated goals?

Proposal 14.

The foundational seminars have the same problem as in proposal 11, as do the engagement
courses and the capstone. Disciplinary requirements are eliminated, which I oppose, for the
reasons already given. The proposal does away with a humanities requirement, and the centrality
of philosophy and theology as such.

Proposal 15

Theme 1 eliminates philosophy and theology. Theme 2 eliminates theology. Theme 3 cuts
requirements down to one philosophy. We need more robust requirement in the Humanities,
and, given our Jesuit heritage, in Philosophy and Theology as such.

Thank you for your work on the core revision project. Few projects at Marquette are of as great
important.
I've read (but certainly not studied) the Core Revision Proposals. Here are some brief thoughts:

1. Most proposals seem a bit implausible and impractical, given the nature, size, diversity, and resources of the University.

2. I'm inclined towards providing strong guidance aimed at building student competence, mastery and maturity, rather than assuming that students are ready to be responsible themselves for plotting a course for their growth when they first arrive. That means I simultaneously prefer both structure (requirements) and freedom (plenty of opportunity to explore content and modes of inquiry).

3. I found Proposal #9 appealing for its structure and "familiarity." It seems plausible, feasible, and general enough to appeal across the university. One suggestion regarding the schematic model: At the "foundational level, the picture places "Theological Inquiry" at the center of the 5 areas. First, I think this would be an overemphasis if the picture implies a greater centrality of this set of skills relative to the others. Second, I'd be more inclined to have a "central" area called something more general, such as "Modes of Inquiry", which might include theological, philosophical, aesthetic, and empirical inquiry.

4. Whatever is done with the new core, it need to be supported with adequate resources. The College of Arts and Science's failed "Senior Experience" should have taught us this lesson, among many others.

Good luck as the process moves forward.
3/31 faculty: arts and sciences

I applaud the various efforts represented in these proposals to address in an explicit manner a number of important desiderata, e.g., integration (and, to a lesser extent, sequencing), Jesuit ethos and pedagogy, cross-disciplinary classroom teaching possibilities, possibilities for a common 1st year experience, etc. These were items that, for a variety of reasons (some good, some bad), were not part of the agenda of the 2000-2003 Core Curriculum Review Committee, of which I was a member and from which emerged the basic structure of the current Core of Common Studies. The proposals all also reflect efforts to engage a variety of the issues connected with modes of “delivery” of the core, some of which begin to push the envelope in innovative ways.

At the same time, I see two major problems that make it difficult to offer any firm judgment with respect to grouping the proposals as “good,” “better,” or “best.”

The first is the lack of sufficient concrete instantiation of what the “core” will actually look like to students in each of Marquette University undergraduate colleges; what is the array and/or the sequence of courses the students will be expected to take/to choose from in accord with each of the models? At this point, the models look more like a shelf of “black boxes” that give the user little sense for what might actually be in any one box, let alone in the whole set. A consequence of this problem is that there also is very little basis for a reasonable projection of the resources in personnel and for planning that will be needed to get any of the models up and running.

My second major problem may be idiosyncratic, but I nonetheless consider it worthwhile communicating. I have what may be considered a quite “old-fashioned” view (rooted partly in the views of Plato and Aristotle about the intellectual maturity needed for the study of philosophy, ethics, and theology, and partly in the experience of four decades of teaching) about the appropriate curricular location of the study of philosophy and theology. That place is in junior and senior year; I take that to be represent the point in their undergraduate education at which the have (or should have) developed skills for critical reading (such as attention to conceptual structure and the ability to differentiate literary genres), have gained a sense for the oft-recalcitrant complexity of human history, have had some training in the experimental-quantitative techniques of science as well as some knowledge of its history and, finally, have received a (healthy) dose of acquaintance with one of the arts. I would be interested (and perhaps even eager) to see how those elements might be articulated within the various models.
3/31 faculty: arts and sciences
The language of Proposal #4 and Proposal #11 is problematic, in particular "Men and Women for all". What if a student neither identifies as a man or a woman? Are they not welcome to participate?
Top proposals (in my opinion): Proposal #1, Proposal #14, Proposal #15, and Proposal #9. I am drawn to those particular proposals as they seek to engage the students actively in the world around them here in Milwaukee as well as in the US and globally. I favor the use of common first year seminars and capstones. Questioning, seeking truth, exhibiting compassion, and the quest for social justice are important themes as well.
Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposals put forward by the work groups. As asked, I will keep my comments thematic, bringing up particular proposals as examples rather than simply voting for or against each.

It seems to me that with the possibility of adding a first year experience and possibly a capstone, proposals 5, 7/8, 9, and 12 go a long way toward keeping the current structure of the UCCS.

If we are looking to change the Core, a few principles need to be kept in mind:
1. no more credits than the current core (which is violated by proposal 10.)
2. not so rigid that majors would have a hard time working around the structure. The one proposal that seems extraordinarily rigid is 15.
3. Not so labor intensive to run or complicated to schedule that it is unlikely to work. Proposal 6 strikes me as very complicated to track.

The most common elements that people want to add to our core are:
1. More integration. (within the UCCS and between the UCCS and the students program) Though proposal 5 states that the circles can be seen as a path through the core creating integration, the order would not work for many majors nor would taking the courses in that order add any integration to the core.
2. Add the values of Ignatian spirituality, diversity and inclusion, global awareness, environmental concern, and ethical decision making
3. Scaffolding to ensure depth of education. Proposals 1, 6, 11, and 14 decrease the depth of the educational experience students get in the core. By in some cases reducing the exposure of students to the basic content and skills courses central to a liberal arts and sciences education and in other cases allowing any interested faculty member to teach core classes, rather than those with the disciplinary expertise in the subject, these proposals “dumb down” the core. I am especially disheartened by the notion that anyone can teach the core subjects. It is my understanding that we are currently crafting a document restricting instruction of classes to those with the relevant credentials. I would hope we would not think the subject matter of the core less important or less difficult to teach than the rest of the curriculum.

I think that we begin by adding a freshman seminar that helps students adjust to college life in the full sense of being a member of a diverse academic community with high expectations for its members.

A capstone, one that integrates the UCCS, would be desirable if there is room and resources.

The current notion of a set of academic requirements divided into areas is fine for a structure, but these areas need to be integrated through team teaching and paired courses. Some structure needs to be added by sequencing courses (the CCRC has maps of how students currently move through the core that would allow us to intentionally sequence material for students.) The current set of courses should be all but scrapped. Why would the ethics course we offer our students be a theory course rather than an applied ethics course? Why wouldn’t the second writing course involve a course embedded tutor in a major-specific course? And, why do both the current core
and almost all the proposals ignore the importance of the social sciences in a liberal arts education, while most of the proposals express a desire to have our students become more engaged with the knowledge and values taught in the social sciences? Like proposal 2, I think the first level of courses should be relatively the same – a CORE – not a distributional requirement. The second tier should also be “the same” in important respects not “Take an ethics class” but “take an ethics class that complements your major/interests e.g. Business Ethics; Bioethics; Environmental Ethics…

So, I suggest we:

1. Keep something like the current structure with a first year experience and maybe a capstone.
2. Scrap the current set of courses.
3. Go back to the assessable outcomes - including the 3 elements people demonstrated they wanted by including them in so many of the 15 proposals (see above).
4. Develop a set of courses taught by the people who know the disciplinary material we want covered – using some team teaching, paired courses, and course sequencing to ensure depth and integration.

3/31 faculty: arts and sciences
Hello and thank you for the opportunity to review the proposals.

Some of the components I saw across proposals that I really liked include:

- A dedicated first year course—especially when they were focused on disciplines and skills development
- Models that combine reflection and the development of concrete skills (i.e. the students need to be taught how to discuss…)
- Core outcomes connected to majors/minors (bit a Core that still encompassed the University and was not limited by Colleges)

Some concerns I have include:

- Managing integrated and/or team taught classes.
  - I am teaching a linked class in the Honors program (PHIL 2310/HIST 2001) for the second time and it is great for the students to carry conversations and methodologies across the classes—ideal! But it also requires a lot of work and coordination—if I cannot do it on a regular rotation with the same partner, it will be too challenging (and there is sufficient variation in content—cf. methodological and thematic questions—that this is a huge challenge).
  - Although the students love the linked classes, it is a scheduling nightmare.
  - This goes back to my experience with the Senior Capstone that ultimately was only required of A&S BA students—I don’t want to put a lot of work into designing a challenging (in a good way) class, that I will only do once.
- Developing new classes—if we develop new classes, what goes away? As it is, teaching Core/required classes means I teach infrequently in my own area. And teaching in my research area, helps me do scholarship—how will Marquette balance these demands?
- 1 credit classes and student commitment
  - Also tied to experiences teaching HOPR—you cannot have a student do as much preparation or production for a 1 credit class—as a result, you are doing less in class and the students also take it less seriously.
Dear Colleagues,

Here are some reflections occasioned by the Theology Department’s discussion of core revision yesterday. A recent document from the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU), "Recent Trends in General Education Design, Learning Outcomes, and Teaching Approaches," published on 19 January of this year discussed trends in core revision across the country. What follows are my reflections based on the Theology Department's conversation, my reading of the 15 core proposals, and the AACU document.

From this document I draw four main trends that seem to me not all that controversial. They are

1. use the distribution model but ensure integration of knowledge, skills, and applications in the program of general education.
2. clear learning outcomes used to assess student achievement
3. include global courses and a first-year seminar
4. core should be well integrated with students’ major requirements.

Now these four ideas, especially the first three, tend to come up a lot in the 15 proposals, and much of what these four ideas include is already in our present core. We already use a distribution model in the current core. All core courses, knowledge areas, and, indeed, the core itself have learning outcomes, which are used to generate assessment reports on the core. However, in all of these core-revision discussions, I haven't seen much reference to assessment data gathered on the core. Our current core is integrated pretty well into various majors since almost all the present core courses fit into one major or another, and the colleges that have their own curricula easily include the entire core into those respective curricula. Our core includes global courses in the sense that several of the core courses do cover cultures on other continents (history and foreign languages classes among them).

What these four ideas include that our current core does not comes down to two things: some device for integrating the core and a first-year seminar. These two notions get a lot of play in the 15 proposals. So we would do well, I believe, to make sure that whatever specific proposals we make or endorse include some explicit device for integrating the core.

I think the new core should pursue two other goals. The first of these is literacy as something our core should help our students to learn. We find ourselves with students who are trained in memorizing discrete bits of information, in reading simply to register an overall impression of a text (thus, they have high comfort with stories and discomfort with arguments, and they often call all books, even non-fiction ones, over a certain number of pages "novels"), and in writing in order to express or to leave such an overall impression. On this training we need to help them build the ability to appreciate knowledge that is not information and arrangements of knowledge that are not stories, to ask why knowledge and information are arranged in such various ways, and to read and to produce arguments built on sufficiently precise grammatical knowledge. I think that aiming to teach as many as aspects of literacy in this sense as possible in all core courses can be a powerful device for integrating the core. Of course, some people might be offended at calling this goal of the core literacy. We could just give it another name in that case.
The second goal to pursue is getting the core sequenced. By a core that is sequenced, I mean one in which certain subjects or things to learn should come before others in the curriculum. All the majors in the University are constructed in this way, at least to some extent. Our current core has some sequencing built into it since almost everyone takes the two rhetoric courses in the first year, for example. If we told ourselves we would strengthen sequencing, we would be forced to consider at least part of an overall vision of what the core is trying to accomplish, a desideratum that many of the 15 core proposals have endorsed. In addition, the overall vision governing the sequencing of core courses would be a strong integrating principle for the core.

Furthermore, I am convinced that the core need not be smaller. On this point, see my note sent earlier today to all the faculty. U. of. Detroit Mercy has as heavy an influence of professional schools as we do here, and their proposed new core is the same size as ours. It will likely be feasible, even with their nursing, health sciences, engineering, and architecture schools. Right now Engineering requires a minimum of 131-135 credits for an undergrad. Thus, our current core leaves room for 95-99 credits of engineering-related courses for these students. According to the Undergraduate Bulletin. This combination of core and engineering curricula can be achieved in four years. Similarly, the nursing degree at Marquette requires 128 hours, which, after the core of 36 credits, leaves students 92 credits for nursing courses. Now their nursing major requires only 78 credits. Health Sciences, too, requires 128 credits, of which only 33 are needed for the Biomedical Sciences major, plus 20-27 credits of cognate science courses and courses required by that college. Thus, there is plenty of room for our current core. In the 129-credit bachelor's Business Administration curricula, too, there is plenty of room for our current core. This college has a curriculum including 21-27 credits, in addition to the University core, that all students in that college have to take. On top of these 57-63 credits, they require 39 other credits of business courses common to all majors. Since some of those courses fit into just about any major, a standard 33-credit major (for example, in accounting) can be completed by taking the 129-credit minimum.

Thanks for considering my opinion and for all of your good work on our core. Blessings on the work ahead of you.
3/30 faculty: arts and sciences
Dear Core revision committee,

As I read through the proposals, I focused primarily on two things: flexibility and integration. Flexibility is important because of the curricular needs of the various colleges. So, for example, a proposal that requires all freshmen to take 18 credits of core courses is not likely to be workable across the university. Integration can mean many different things, and I looked for proposals that gave the possibility of vertical integration of the core across a student’s four years, horizontal integration among the subjects covered by the core, and the potential of integration between the core and a student’s major discipline. The proposals that stood out for me were the following:

Proposal 7: I like the integration in this proposal that comes from the focus on different modes of inquiry. I’m intrigued by the idea that at least some of the core could be delivered within each major discipline. On the other hand, this would require large-scale faculty buy-in and the willingness of faculty in each department to really modify their courses to meet core objectives. I wonder how realistic that is and how “compliance” with core learning objectives would be ensured. Proposal 12 suffers from the same concern.

Proposal 9: I like the flexibility of this proposal, though it does not seek to integrate the core with major disciplines in any way.

Proposal 14: I think this proposal most successfully achieves both flexibility and integration. The core courses would not be delivered within each discipline, which eliminates the concerns I raised about proposal 7, but students would have the ability to choose from several themes for their core curriculum and could choose a theme that was at least somewhat related to their course of study. Faculty within each major discipline would have the option of linking their own courses more or less to the core themes.
I don’t have a single favorite (indeed, even the one I was involved in developing has flaws!), but I have some general comments about emerging threads and concerns about implementation:

--I very much approve of the trend toward offering team-taught, foundational classes. It’s the most natural way of addressing interdisciplinarity and will also ensure that the foundational courses aren’t simply drawn from a menu of pre-existing surveys.

--All fields should be represented one way or another. This isn’t to say that every department in A & S (or any college) should have a specific class or classes in the Core, but there should be some facet of the core in which departments/fields can contribute, courses that they can recognize as being part of their portfolio on campus. This is necessary for exposing students to as wide a range of experiences and ways of thinking as possible, but also to offer samples for possible majors and minors.

--I would hope that the responsibility for teaching the second semester of writing, should there be a second semester of writing in the core, be spread throughout the curriculum, at least where appropriate; many departments require a great deal of writing in upper division classes, and that practice could be made more purposeful if included in the core.

--Although it will be easy for the following to be taken as defending turf, it’s not really how I mean it; current levels of tenure-track staffing really have to be taken into account when determining responsibilities for core offerings. That doesn’t necessarily mean, as I stated earlier, that every department has to have a class in the core, but there has to be something for tenure-track faculty in every department to do in the core (team-taught classes created specifically for the core, for instance). They need to be engaged at every level.

--I would like to see a way for the core to encourage exploration of bundles of classes that may not amount to a minor, but do guide students to explore fields outside their disciplines. Some of the proposals at least hint at this; simply requiring three classes outside your major, in a single field, would encourage exploration and, at least in A & S, no doubt lead students to pick up minor or even majors that they hadn’t considered.
3/18 faculty: arts and sciences
Hello,

I think proposals 11 and 15 are the most promising. Thanks,